poets and painters whom China has known—Li Po and Tu Fu among the former, and Wu Tao-Tzu, Han Kan, and Wang Wei among the latter—all of them names to conjure with and of all of whom we shall have occasion to say more in a moment.

In spite of its brilliance, however, the glory of Hsiian Tsung's reign was partly illusory. Even before his accession, at the collapse of Wu Hou's regime, changes looking toward decentralization had been made in the bureaucracy. In place of direct control from Ch'angan over all members of the hierarchy, a resident commissioner or governor was appointed for each province with the duty of overseeing the officials within his jurisdiction. At the time the innovation probably seemed a wise method of supervising the Empire, but it proved a step toward disintegration, for it tended toward the reestablishment of local states.

Hsiian Tsung, too, was to live to witness the decline of the prestige of Chinese arms abroad. In 751 Kao Hsien-chih—thanks in part to unrest among the subject peoples aroused by his own perfidy and cupidity—was badly defeated by the Arabs north of Ferghana. Its weakness thus vividly demonstrated, in much of the West Chinese rule crumbled like a house of cards and the region passed largely into the hands of two Turkish peoples, the Karluks in the West and the Uighurs in the North and East. To the Northeast the Khitans (Ch'i-tan) moved from the southern portion of Manchuria into the North China plain. In the Southwest the Chinese suffered disastrous reverses (751) in what is now Yunnan. Here a native principality called Nan Chao had submitted to the T'ang, and there had followed the most nearly effective control which the Chinese had yet exerted in the area.

Now, with at least the moral support of the Tibetans, who gave to the king of Nan Chao the title of Tung Ti, or Emperor of the East, Chinese garrisons were expelled and Chinese armies defeated.

In China proper revolt arose against Hsiian Tsung. His wars and his court extravagances impoverished the people and complaint against him was widespread. Even in the days of his prosperity, his most influential minister, Li Lin-fu, had been a sinister influence and, among other acts, had encouraged him to slay the heir apparent without trial. The Emperor, too, fell largely under the control of one of the most famous of Chinese